



California Postsecondary Education Commission

Update on the Commission's University Eligibility Study for the Class of 2007

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Since 1983, the Commission has conducted six studies of the university eligibility of high school graduates. The purpose of these studies is to estimate the percentage of California public high school graduates who meet the admission requirements of the California State University (CSU) and the University of California (UC). The studies are conducted by collecting a sample of transcripts from high schools throughout the state. The transcripts are reviewed by university staff to compare the courses, grades, and test scores with admission requirements. Statewide eligibility rates are estimated from this sample.

At its September 2006 meeting, the Commission adopted a resolution stating its intention to proceed with an eligibility study for the high school graduating class of 2007. The resolution urged the legislature to provide UC and CSU with funding for the evaluation of transcripts needed in the study.

A 2007 study is needed because the current eligibility rates for both systems are now uncertain. UC has changed the way it determines eligibility since the Commission's last study in 2003. CSU changed its course requirements shortly before the 2003 study and schools have had more time to adjust their course offerings in response to these changes. The effect of UC's changes on the eligibility of Latino and African American high school graduates is also a concern. A 2007 study will show how UC's recent changes have affected eligibility for these ethnic groups, which are underrepresented at the University.

Advisory Committee

The Commission has begun planning the 2007 study and is taking steps to form an advisory committee. On October 25, 2006, the Commission's Executive Director invited UC, CSU, the Department of Finance, the Department of Education, and the Legislative Analyst's Office to nominate a representative to the committee. The Commission will make every effort to hold an inaugural meeting of the committee by mid-December.

A major task of the Advisory Committee will be to make recommendations that will ensure that the margin of error of the study is within acceptable limits. The margin of error of the Commission's 2003 study was larger than in previous studies because the number of schools that could be included was limited by the availability of university staff to review transcripts. Including more schools in the sample will reduce the margin of error but will increase the cost of the study and might lengthen the time needed to review transcripts. A major consideration will be the tradeoff between the cost of the study, the ability to complete review of transcripts in a timely way, and the value of having more precise estimates of university eligibility.

Schedule for the Study

The 2003 study was completed in May 2004, about 12 months after courses and grades for the 2002–03 academic year were available from schools. If the 2007 study is conducted in generally the same way as the 2003 study, it would be feasible to complete it on a similar schedule, provided that data collection is started in May 2007.

The table below shows some of the key steps in the study, and the dates needed to complete a study report by May 2008. A sampling plan would have to be in place by March 2007 in order for data collection to start in May. This would mean that decisions on margin of error and study methodology would have to be made by the end of January 2007.

As yet, there has been no agreement with UC and CSU faculty and other interested parties on the study methodology. If another methodology is used, such as collecting transcripts by mail from a wider variety of schools, the schedule would be very different from that shown in the table.

Schedule needed to complete the 2007 Eligibility Study by May 2008

Step	Completion date
1. Set a standard for the margin of error of the study and identify mitigation strategy.	Late January 2007
2. Develop a sampling plan consistent with the requirements in step 1. <i>Contract with statistical consultant may be needed.</i>	Mid March 2007
3. Approval of sampling plan by Advisory Committee.	Late March 2007
4. Apply procedures in the sampling plan to select the schools to be sampled.	Early May 2007
5. Contact the selected schools and arrange for data transmission.	Mid May 2007
6. Collect data from schools.	Late August 2007
7. Process transcript data with computer-based system and review cases where the computer-based system cannot make a conclusive determination of eligibility. <i>Window for this work is September to early November, before admissions start.</i>	Early November 2007
8. Collect data from schools that were slow to respond in step 6. Review transcripts from these schools and make quality control checks of transcript review.	Early March 2008
9. Compile final file of results and transmit to the Commission.	Mid March 2008
10. Apply statistical procedures to estimate statewide eligibility rates from sample results. Write study report.	Early May 2008
11. Review by segments and Advisory Committee.	Mid May 2008
12. Revise report as needed and submit to the legislature.	Late May 2008